

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0827

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AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TAIPEI 5812

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, TW, US

SUBJECT: SUMMER 1976: LOCAL VIEWS ON U.S. CHINA POLICY

1. SUMMARY: DESPITE VARIOUS DEVELOPMENTS IN THE U.S. WHICH ARE PERCEIVED HERE AS FAVORABLE TO THE ROC, MOST PEOPLE ON TAIWAN, BOTH IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT, STILL BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE ITS POLICY OF NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH THE PRC, WITH THE GOAL OF ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH IT. HOWEVER, THERE APPEARS TO BE A GROWING BELIEF HERE THAT AMERICANS IN GENERAL AND USG OFFICIALS IN PARTICULAR ARE NOW MORE COGNIZANT OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE CHINA QUESTION THAN THEY WERE SIX MONTHS AGO AND THAT, AS A RESULT, THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION, WHETHER REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT, WILL PURSUE NORMALIZATION MORE CAUTIOUSLY AND PRAGMATICALLY THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED IN THE PAST. THIS, ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL CONVENTIONAL WISDOM, MAY RESULT IN A MORE FAVORABLE SET OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONTINUING SUBSTANTIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ROC AND THE U.S. FOLLOWING NORMALIZATION AND IN A MORE SATISFACTORY SUBSTITUTE FOR THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY THAN MANY HERE HAD EXPECTED EARLIER. THERE IS STILL A HARD CORE OF OPINION, HOWEVER, THAT CONTINUES TO SEE NORMALIZATION AS INEVITABLY HAVING DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES LOCALLY.

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QUENCES LOCALLY.

2. AT THE SAME TIME, SENSING A POSSIBLE CRACK IN U.S. CHINA POLICY, THE GROG CAN BE EXPECTED TO SEEK TO WIDEN IT THROUGH GREATER PUBLICITY EFFORTS, INCLUDING INCREASED PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS WITH U.S. OPINION-MAKERS AND INFLUENCERS, STIMULATION OF U.S. PRESS COMMENTARY FAVORABLE TO THE GROG, AND THE DISPATCH OF CULTURAL, TRADE, AND OTHER MISSIONS TO THE U.S. WHILE OUTWARDLY THESE EFFORTS MAY APPEAR TO BE AIMED AT REVERSING OUR PRESENT POLICY OF IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE PRC, WE BELIEVE THAT SENIOR GROG OFFICIALS REALISTICALLY VIEW THE OPTIMUM RESULT OF THEIR EFFORTS AS A POSSIBLE DELAYING--RATHER THAN PREVENTING--OF COMPLETION OF THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS AND OBTAINING OF SOMEWHAT MORE FAVORABLE CONDITIONS FOR POST-NORMALIZATION US/ROC RELATIONS.

3. ALTHOUGH THE STATE OF US/ROC RELATIONS CONTINUES TO BE THE MAJOR GROG FOREIGN POLICY CONCERN, THE EFFORTS TO CONDITION THE LOCAL POPULACE TO THE INEVITABILITY OF U.S. RECOGNITION OF THE PRC APPEAR TO HAVE RESULTED IN A SOMEWHAT DECREASED LEVEL OF PUBLIC INTEREST IN DAY-TO-DAY PRONOUNCEMENTS BY U.S. OFFICIALS ON CHINA POLICY. IT HAS ALSO APPARENTLY PROMPTED AT LEAST SOME TO CONSIDER VARIOUS OPTIONS (E.G., "SOVIET" AND "SEPARATE STATUS" OPTIONS) FOR A FUTURE WITHOUT DIPLOMATIC TIES TO THE U.S. HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THAT MOST WHO MENTION SUCH OPTIONS CONSIDER THEM SERIOUSLY. MOREOVER, THERE IS AT PRESENT NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT SUCH THINKING IS PREVALENT AMONG SENIOR GROG OFFICIALS OR WILL PLAY ANY SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN DETERMINING THE GROG ATTITUDE TOWARD U.S. CHINA POLICY AND THE FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

4. IN RECENT WEEKS THE LOCAL PRESS HAS HIGHLIGHTED A NUMBER OF STATEMENTS BY U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL PERSONALITIES ON U.S. CHINA POLICY AND US/ROC RELATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN INTERPRETED LOCALLY AS FAVORABLE TO THE ROC. AMONG THESE ARE PRESIDENT FORD'S JUNE 1 COMMENT ON THE "EXCELLENT" STATE OF US/ROC RELATIONS, SECRETARY KISSINGER'S MENTION OF THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY IN PORTLAND ON JULY 23, TIME MAGAZINE'S INTERVIEW ON FOREIGN POLICY WITH CARTER, CONGRESSMAN WOLFF'S REPORT ON HIS TRIP TO THE PRC, RESPONSES BY 24 MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO A LETTER FROM THE ROC SINO-AMERICAN CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC

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ASSOCIATION (PRESS REPORT POUCHED EA/ROC), AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM'S CHINA PLANK. THESE STATEMENTS, TOGETHER WITH WHAT WAS PERCEIVED HERE AS USG SUPPORT FOR THE ROC DURING THE RECENT OLYMPICS BROUHAHA, HAVE ENCOURAGED THE LOCAL PRESS, IN EDITORIALS AND COMMENTARIES, TO SUGGEST THAT THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZING US/PRC RELATIONS IS OFF THE TRACK AND TO ATTACK DIRECTLY THE SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE AS A DOCUMENT OF NO LEGAL STANDING.

5. HOWEVER, BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH GROG OFFICIALS AND OTHERS CONCERNED ABOUT U.S. CHINA POLICY, THE FREQUENTLY OPTIMISTIC PRESS VIEW OF U.S. CHINA POLICY IS NOT SHARED BY MOST PEOPLE HERE. VIRTUALLY EVERYONE WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN IN RECENT WEEKS CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT U.S. RECOGNITION OF THE PRC AND THE BREAKING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE ROC ARE PROBABLY INEVITABLE.

6. A SURPRISINGLY LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE BOTH IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT HAS AT LEAST A VAGUE AWARENESS OF THE CHINA PLANKS IN THE DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORMS AND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON U.S. CHINA POLICY. DESPITE THE DIFFERENCE IN WORDING OF THE TWO PLANKS, HOWEVER, THE PRESENTLY PREVAILING VIEW APPEARS TO BE THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WILL HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON THE PRESENT DIRECTION OF U.S. POLICY TOWARD NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH THE PRC AND THAT CARTER OR FORD, WHOEVER IS ELECTED, WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE THIS GOAL.

7. HOWEVER, MANY HAVE INTERPRETED THE RECENT STATEMENTS ON U.S. CHINA POLICY NOTED ABOVE AS AN INDICATION THAT AMERICANS IN GENERAL AND USG OFFICIALS IN PARTICULAR ARE NOW MORE CONGIZANT OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE CHINA QUESTION THAN THEY WERE SIX MONTHS AGO AND THAT, AS A RESULT, THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION, WHETHER REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT, WILL PURUSE NORMALIZATION MORE CAUTIOUSLY AND PRAGMATICALLY THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED IN THE PAST, AND WITH MORE ATTENTION TO REDUCING THE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON TAIWAN. THIS, ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL CONVENTIONAL WISDOM, MAY RESULT IN A MORE FAVORABLE SET OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONTINUING SUBSTANTIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ROC AND THE

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STITUTE FOR THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY THAN MANY HAD EXPECTED EARLIER.

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8. HOWEVER, SOME HERE -- BOTH IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT -- CONTINUE TO SEE NORMALIZATION AS INEVITABLY HAVING DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES LOCALLY. IN PARTICULAR, THEY POINT TO THE DIFFICULTY (IF NOT IMPOSSIBILITY) IN FORMULATING ANY SUBSTITUTE FOR THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY THAT WOULD BE SATISFACTORY TO THE ROC OR IN OBTAINING ADEQUATE AND LONG-TERM GUARANTEES FROM THE PRC THAT IT WILL NOT USE FORCE AGAINST THE ROC. SOME OF THEM ALSO FEAR THAT ONCE THE U.S. RECOGNIZES THE PRC, THE PRC WILL FEEL FREE TO ESCALATE ATTEMPTS TO ISOLATE THE ROC ECONOMICALLY. THIS, IN THE VIEW OF SOME HERE, IN THE LONG RUN MAY BE NEARLY AS SERIOUS A THREAT TO THE ROC'S CONTINUED VIABILITY AS A DIRECT ATTACK BY THE PRC.

9. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED, HOWEVER, THAT NO SIGNIFICANT FORWARD STEPS WILL BE TAKEN IN THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS UNTIL AFTER THE NEXT PRESIDENT TAKES OFFICE AND THAT, BECAUSE OF INCREASED AWARENESS IN THE U.S. OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE CHINA QUESTION, IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME TO WORK OUT AN ACCEPTABLE FORMULA FOR NORMALIZATION.

10. WE EXPECT THAT THE GROC WILL SEEK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS TIME ELEMENT AND ATTEMPT TO BROADEN WHAT IS PERCEIVED
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HERE AS A POSSIBLE CRACK IN U.S. CHINA POLICY. MOFA OFFICIALS HAVE FREQUENTLY COMMENTED TO EMBOFFS THAT ONE OF THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS THEY ARE FACING IN ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE U.S. OPINION ON THE CHINA QUESTION IS A LACK OF AWARENESS ON THE PART OF MANY AMERICANS OF WHAT THE ROC IS. THE OLYMPICS, THEY BELIEVE, HAS DONE MUCH TO OVERCOME THIS IMAGE PROBLEM.

11. WE EXPECT THE GROC TO FOLLOW-UP THIS ADVANTAGE BY EXPANDING ITS PUBLICITY EFFORTS IN THE U.S., INCLUDING INCREASED PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS WITH U.S. OPINION-MAKERS AND INFLUENCERS, STIMULATION OF U.S. PRESS COMMENTARY FAVORABLE TO THE GROC, AND THE DISPATCH OF CULTURAL, TRADE, AND OTHER MISSIONS TO THE U.S. AS THE DEPARTMENT HAS ALREADY NOTED (STATE 207517), THE NUMBER OF ROC GOODWILL AND CULTURAL GROUPS VISITING THE U.S. HAS BEEN INCREASING. PART OF THE INCREASE IS PROBABLY DUE TO U.S. BICENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES. HOWEVER, THE GROC UNDOUBTEDLY SEES ADVANTAGE IN ENCOURAGING AS MANY GROUPS AS POSSIBLE TO VISIT THE U.S. IN ORDER TO INCREASE U.S. AWARENESS OF THE ROC, AND WE WOULD EXPECT SUCH VISITS TO CONTINUE TO OCCUR MORE FREQUENTLY THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS, ALBEIT WITH A SOMEWHAT LOWER PROFILE THAN DURING THE USUAL HEAVY SUMMER SCHEDULE. WE ALSO NOTE THAT AN INCREASING NUMBER OF TRADE MISSIONS ARE TRAVELLING TO THE U.S. WHILE MOST OF THESE SEEM TO HAVE SPECIFIC COMMERCIAL MISSIONS, THEY TOO CONTRIBUTE TO AN INCREASED AWARENESS OF THE ROC AMONG U.S. BUSINESS SECTORS.

12. OUTWARDLY, THESE PUBLICITY EFFORTS MAY APPEAR TO BE AIMED AT REVERSING OUR PRESENT POLICY OF MOVING TOWARD NORMALIZATION WITH THE PRC BY SEEKING TO ENHANCE THE ROC'S IMAGE IN THE U.S. AND TO CONVINCE AMERICANS THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE ROC SHOULD NOT BE BROKEN. HOWEVER, CONVERSATIONS WITH SENIOR GROC OFFICIALS LEAVE US WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY HAVE A REALISTIC VIEW OF U.S. CHINA POLICY AND PERCEIVE THE OPTIMUM RESULT OF THEIR EFFORTS AS A POSSIBLE DELAYING (RATHER THAN PREVENTING) OF COMPLETION OF THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS AND OBTAINING OF SOMEWHAT MORE FAVORABLE CONDITIONS FOR POST-NORMALIZATION US/ROC RELATIONS.

13. ALTHOUGH ITS RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. CONTINUES TO BE THE MAJOR GROC FOREIGN POLICY CONCERN, MOST PEOPLE HERE SEEM TO BE GENERALLY CONDITIONED TO LIVING UNDER THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES
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WHICH THE POSSIBILITY OF U.S. DERECOGNITION OF THE ROC REPRESENTS TO THEM. THIS HAS RESULTED IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SOMEWHAT DECREASED LEVEL OF INTEREST ON THE PART OF MANY IN DAY-TO-DAY PRONOUNCEMENTS BY U.S. OFFICIALS ON CHINA POLICY AND A BELIEF THAT SINCE NORMALIZATION IS MERELY A QUESTION OF TIME, IT IS FUTILE TO REACT TO EPHEMERAL "SIGNALS" FROM THE U.S. IT ALSO IS OCCASIONALLY MANIFESTED BY SUGGESTIONS, FROM MIDDLE AND LOWER LEVEL OFFICIALS AS WELL AS BY OTHERS OUTSIDE GOVERNMENT, THAT MORE CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO A FUTURE FOR THE ROC THAT MIGHT NOT INCLUDE CONTINUED HEAVY RELIANCE ON THE U.S.

14. OPTIONS FOR SUCH A FUTURE, WHICH ARE RARELY DEFINED OR ELABORATED UPON, COMMONLY INCLUDE THE "SOVIET" OPTION (USUALLY PERCEIVED AS INVOLVING THE SOVIET UNION IN THE ROC BY LEASING

LAND TO IT FOR USE AS A BASE) AND THE "SEPARATE STATUS" OPTION (WHEREBY THE ROC WOULD DROP ITS CLAIM, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, TO BE THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT OF ALL OF CHINA). COMMENTS ON THESE OPTIONS HAVE USUALLY BEEN MADE AS ASIDES OR IN A SEMI-FACETIOUS MANNER, AND WE DOUBT WHETHER MOST WHO MENTION THEM CONSIDER THEM AS SERIOUS OPTIONS. RATHER, THEY SEEM TO DERIVE FROM A SENSE OF FRUSTRATION OVER THE ROC'S APPARENT INABILITY TO INFLUENCE U.S. POLICY IN ANY SIGNIFICANT WAY, A SENSE OF INSECURITY ABOUT WHETHER THE ROC WILL BE ABLE TO "GO IT ALONE" AFTER DERECOGNITION, AND AS A VEILED WARNING OF POSSIBLE DIRE RESULTS SHOULD THE U.S. INSIST ON COMPLETING NORMALIZATION WITH THE PRC. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT SENIOR GROC OFFICIALS ARE GIVING SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO EITHER OF THESE OPTIONS. MOREOVER, WE DOUBT THAT SUCH THINKING--EVEN IF IT GROWS IN POPULARITY AS NORMALIZATION PROGRESSES--WILL PLAY ANY SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN DETERMINING THE GROC ATTITUDE TOWARD U.S. CHINA POLICY OR THE ROC'S FUTURE.

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